Auberge du Coucou

Auberge, a French word, means inn or hostel in English. Since meals may also be served, this word can refer to a restaurant. Auberge du Coucou was a 1950s Parisian restaurant, located at 3 Rue Danielle Casanova, a short distance from the Palais Garnier, a 19th-century opera house.

The street dates to 1634 and has had many different names. In December 1944, a section of Rue des Petits Champs was renamed to honour Danielle Casanova. She joined the Communist Youth movement in 1928 and was a member of the resistance during the Nazi occupation. On February 15, 1942, after leaving the hiding place of a Jewish couple, she was arrested by the French Police. In January 1943, she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and died on May 9, 1943, from typhus.

3 Rue Daniella Casanova has, until recently, been occupied by Boco, a 100% organic food restaurant. The current occupant is Midoré Café, specializing in pastries and breads such as French baguettes. If you enjoy munching on mini macarons, the price is 1 Euro each.

The Auberge du Coucou advertisement token features a cuckoo bird. This bird, with an estimated global population between 25 million and 100 million, is named for the distinctive noise it makes. Cuckoos, which can live to over six years, eat insects and are particularly fond of hairy caterpillars. They also have a preference for laying their eggs in the nests of other birds.

An examination of this token has revealed something unusual. On the obverse side, there is a light spraying of silver paint. Once applied, this paint was brushed off the raised areas. The reverse side has silver paint around the numbers and letters of the address and the telephone number.

An internet search was done to find another example of this token. Finding nothing, a French-language email was sent to two email addresses in Paris. A reply was received from CGB.FR Numismatics Paris. They have never had the opportunity to offer this item for sale and could not find any written references regarding it.

Further searches have revealed that Claude Coutel, the proprietor of Auberge du Coucou, used picture postcards as advertisements. The postcard above is dated 1950, and the word “Chandeleur” (Candlemass in English) is a French religious holiday, occurring on the 2nd of February, 40 days after Christmas. Mistinguett is the stage name for Jeanne Florentine Bourgeois, a famous French actress and singer. She was one of the Moulin Rouge’s biggest stars and, in 1919, her legs were insured for 500,000 Francs. I have placed a picture of her on the top right corner of this postcard. She is seated and holding a raised glass of wine in the postcard. Located directly behind her is Claude Coutel, wearing his Chef’s white uniform. She

apparently enjoyed dining at this restaurant, as she has appeared in other postcards.

This 1953 postcard features a picture taken at an event held at the Grand Palais des Champs-Élysées. The person wearing the glasses is Vincent Jules Auriol, the President of France from 1947 to 1954. Coutel is on the left, looking directly towards the president.

In 1950, Claude Coutel commissioned an artist to paint Vieille-Brioude, the village where he lived as a child. Paulette, his niece, stated he was fond of pointing at the painting and saying, “I’m from here.” Paintings of several historical sites in the capital, such as the Eiffel Tower and Arc de Triomphe, were also commissioned and hung on the walls.

In 2020, the oil painting of Coutel’s Vieille-Brioude was discovered rolled up in a cupboard in the village’s town hall. Since the paint is peeling and there are cuts in the canvas, Roland Chareyron, the mayor, has launched a restoration project. 2,190 Euros have been received in donations to date.

If you plan on visiting France in the near future, you can dine at Auberge du Coucou. This restaurant is located in Locquignol, a commune in northern France, and is a short distance from the French/Belgian border. It serves pâté and other such standard French fare. If you are feeling more adventurous, you can place an order for roasted bone marrow. Use the spoon to transfer the jiggly, fatty marrow to a slice of bread. However, it is more fun to remove the marrow with your fingers and then smear it on the bread. Once this meal is completed, lick your fingers clean before giving the chef the thumbs-up gesture to show your approval.

- Ted Skrecky

Louie Louie’s Diner

Nautical Nellies Steak & Seafood House is a well-known Victoria restaurant at 1001 Wharf Street. Previous restaurants at this location were

Margaritaville Cantina and the Blue Coyote Cafe. A little further back in time, it was Louie Louie's Diner.

George Acs operated an authentic 50's-era diner at this location from April 1987 to March 2003. The name of George's diner refers to Louie's Cafe, owned by his parents, Julius and Rose Acs. It was located on Johnston Street in the late fifties.

In the 1960s, his parents owned The Burger House, located at the corner of Fort Street and Blanshard Street. George stated, in a posted message, that his mother's Borgward Isabella car, with a lime green paint job and a tan roof, could be found parked out in front. Today, this location is a Starbucks Coffee shop.

Many adults living in Victoria have fond memories of Louie Louie's Diner. It had tabletop jukeboxes at every table, and parts of classic cars were attached to the walls and ceilings. Kids' meals were served in a cardboard Bell Air box. The staff at some restaurants sing "Happy Birthday," but the song of choice at this diner was "At the Hop."

This was a very popular place for celebrating birthdays and other milestones. One specialty was 17-scoop sundaes. At one birthday celebration, eight children enthusiastically demolished one of these enormous sundaes with their spoons.

George Acs operated another restaurant called The Hungarian Village Restaurant. It was located at 1546 Cedar Hill X Road from April 1977 to May 2003. The current occupant is Laila Laila Hotpot, which specializes in Chinese cuisine.

Most restaurants exist for a short time. Surprisingly, some have been operating continuously since before the founding of the British thirteen colonies in North America in 1607. The Siftskeller has been in its original location at St. Peter's Abbey in Salzburg, Austria, since 803 A.D. It is believed that Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Christopher Columbus dined there. Another restaurant is La Tour d'Argent in Paris, France, which dates to 1582. One of its frequent patrons was Henry IV, King of France from 1589 to 1610.

Louie Louie's Diner is permanently closed, but lives on in the memories of its former clientele. There is also physical evidence of its existence, such as the $1 token pictured for this article. These tokens can be purchased from internet sites or from coin dealers. T-shirts, featuring their logo along with a jukebox, a guitar-playing rock'n'roller guy, and a 1950s car, can still be found and purchased.

- Ted Skrecky

General Omar Torrijos

Omar Efrain Torrijos Herrera was born in Santiago, Veraguas Province, Republic of Panama, on February 13, 1929. Both of his parents were school teachers. They had a total of twelve children, with Omar as the seventh.

While in school, Omar won a scholarship to the Gerardo Barrios Military Academy in 1948. This

school, located in Antiguo Cuscatlán, El Salvador, was established in 1868. During its long existence, the school's instructors included many military officers of Prussian, Chilean, American, and Salvadoran descent. In June 2022, it was demolished to make way for the construction of the National Stadium of El Salvador.

Once he had completed his training, Torrijos returned to Panama. In 1952, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the National Guard. In 1966, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel.

Arnulfo Arias Madrid, who was popular with the masses, served as President of Panama three times. He was known for his autocratic practices, corruption, and close ties with the United States. On October 1, 1968, he was elected as President for the last time. He had always opposed the influence of the National Guard and planned to restructure it.

On October 11, 1968, the National Guard took preemptive action. President Arias, whose two previous terms in office ended in military coups, took refuge in the Panama Canal Zone, controlled by the United States, before moving on to Miami, Florida. Colonel José Maria Pinilla was installed as president of a provisional government, controlled by a military junta under the leadership of Major Boris Martinez and Lieutenant Colonel Jose Humberto Ramos. Omar Torrijos was promoted to Colonel and named commandant of the National Guard.

Taking advantage of internal opposition to these two coup leaders, Torrijos deposed both Martinez and Ramos on February 23, 1969. He then promoted himself to the rank of brigadier general. In March 1969, he assumed full control over Panama, with the title of "Maximum Leader of the Panamanian Revolution."

Within the National Guard, Colonel Ramiro Silvera and Colonel Amado Sanjur conspired to remove General Torrijos. While Torrijos was out of the country on the night of December 14, 1969, they seized control of the Guard headquarters. Torrijos returned to Panama on December 15, rallied his supporters, and recaptured the headquarters. He appointed Demetrio Lakas as the new President of Panama. Both Silvera, Sanjur, and a third, Colonel, escaped from jail in June 1970, reaching safety in the US-controlled Canal Zone.

During his thirteen-year rule, Torrijos promoted populist policies such as land reform and higher wages for workers. Panama also became a centre for international banking. His greatest achievement was the Torrijos-Carter Treaties of 1977. This agreement resulted in the end of US military presence in the Canal Zone, returning it to Panamanian control at 12:00 noon on December 31, 1999.

Omar Torrijos agreed to amend the Panamanian constitution in 1978, allowing the establishment of political parties. He created the Democratic Revolutionary Party and appointed Aristides Royo, a civilian, as President of Panama. Although Torrijos had stepped down as the Supreme Leader of Panama, he was still the Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard. In 1984, there were to be open democratic presidential elections.

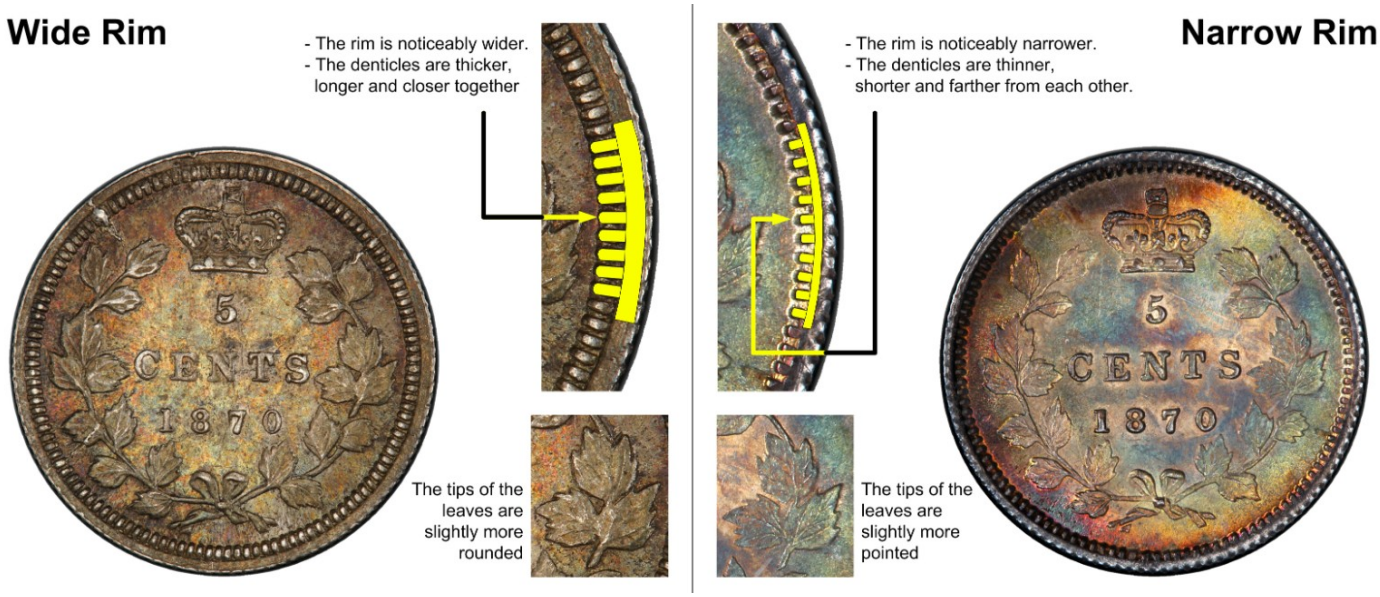
Torrijos, along with several of his aides, boarded a plane at the Rio Hato air base on July 31, 1981, at 10:44 am. It was a military inspection tour, with the town of Coclesito as the destination. Due to bad weather, the aircraft crashed on the slopes of Cerro Marta. There were no survivors. Interestingly, many have raised concerns that the crash was not a weather-related accident.

General Omar Torrijos received a state funeral, and his body is currently located in a mausoleum at the entrance to the former Canal Zone. To honour Torrijos, a gold 500 Balboa coin (0.5977 oz), with a mintage of 500, was issued in 1982. A one Balboa circulating coin was also issued in 1982, with a mintage of 200,000. It was reissued in 1983

and 1984, with the same mintage. This coin is the same size as the General Eisenhower US dollar. The 1 Balboa coin is available for purchase on eBay, but it will cost more than those Eisenhower dollars. Check the foreign coin bins of local coin dealers, and you might find one of these Torrijos coins at a nice, cheapy price.

- Ted Skrecky

Saskatoon Coin Club



On January 13, 1960, the inaugural meeting of the Saskatoon Coin Club was held at the King George Hotel, with 12 attendees. The club currently has approximately 100 members, with 30 to 40 typically in attendance at each meeting. There are no yearly membership dues and no charge for submitting items to the monthly auction. There is, however, an auction limit of 5 lots per member. Also, just like most coin clubs, they host a yearly coin show. The admission fee is $5 for adults.

The club's website is well organized and maintained, and all numismatic enthusiasts need to make a point of visiting it. For starters, at the bottom of the "History" section, there are two links. One is for viewing the complete collection of club metal and wooden tokens. The other is for their Hubuck paper notes. Saskatoon's nickname is Hub City, so the notes are "Hubucks." All of the numismatic pictures are large and clearly rendered, with descriptive comments in the right column.

The really juicy coin info is located in the "Articles" section. Located in "Part 1: Canadian Coin Articles," the first option is "Canadian Coin Grading," where you can select from "1 Cent" to "1 Dollar." There are large pictures of coins with grades such as VG8 and VG10. The coin pictures can be expanded to fill the entire monitor screen, with no loss in resolution. The grading info is in the right column.

The section on Canadian coin die varieties is most definitely worth investigating. An incredible amount of visual detail is provided for each coin variety.

There is much more useful coin information available. Please visit their website, have a look around, and then bookmark it for future reference.

- Ted Skrecky

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